

Business and Buildings: Downtown Honolulu's Old Fashioned Block

Gaylord Wilcox

DOWNTOWN'S OLD FASHIONED BLOCK

As Honolulu moves through the 1970's, a tremendous amount of construction activity continues on in its downtown business district. Much of the significant development taking place makes use of complete city blocks, which affords them a greater opportunity for a more unified and aesthetically pleasing product than did the piecemeal development earlier blocks usually underwent. Examples of this entire block type of development are the Amfac, Davies, and Financial Plaza blocks, whose five buildings total 93 stories. In contrast is the block bound by Merchant, Bishop, Queen and Fort Streets, that nestles in the center of these towering giants. It is a block of bygone eras, in obvious contrast with its neighbors. It is varied (no two buildings planned together), low (its six buildings total 22 stories), aged (57 year average compared to three for the surrounding buildings), and covers a time span of three decades. This is the story of how this block came to be, an attempt to examine the various influences which went into the conception and design of these buildings, and to determine the significance of what those influences produced.

Let us first locate and identify these six buildings as they stand today. Starting at the Makai-Diamond Head corner of Fort and Merchant Streets, where stands the First Federal Building, originally the Judd Building, we move Diamond Head along Merchant to the former Stangenwald, now Dean Witter, Building. Alongside sits the Title Insurance Building, built originally by the *Hawaiian Star*

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Newspaper, and directly behind it fronting on Queen Street is a building constructed by the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. The two other buildings are the Alexander and Baldwin Building, running the width of the block on Bishop Street Diamond Head of the newspaper buildings, and the C. Brewer Building, on the Makai-Ewa corner of the block fronting on both Queen and Fort Streets. All these buildings will be referred to by their original names. Coincidentally, they divide into three groups, each with similar dates, styles, and original builders.

MAMMOUTH MONUMENTS—THE COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The first sentence of the January 1, 1900, edition of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* read, "The year which has now come to a close was one of the most remarkable in Hawaiian history." Indeed, the new century began amidst a remarkable era. Hawaii had been annexed in August, 1898, and that act thrust it into an age of optimism and confidence which America was also enjoying. Hawaii was still predominately a rural (74.5%) and agricultural (63.5% of the labor force) place,¹ where families were large and life expectancies low. A glance at the publications of the day indicate the flavor of the times.

The Friend, a monthly missionary oriented magazine, noted in January that Tramway Company's mules were going to be replaced by electric power,² a signal that the horse and buggy days were numbered. In the monthly magazine *Paradise of the Pacific* the Waikiki Inn ran an ad offering its 21 rooms, with electric lights, each for \$2.00 a day,³ but Waikiki at that time was still a place of duck ponds and country homes. Thomas Thrum's very informative *Hawaiian Annual* for 1900 pronounced 1899 as "a year of agricultural and commercial prosperity unequalled in Hawaii's history," and as for the future, said "Honolulu is on the eve of the greatest improvement in her history."⁴ The islands were definitely in the midst of an inflationary boom period brought on chiefly by annexation and the Spanish-American War, and Thrum had some figures to back his claims. The real property tax on Oahu had doubled in the three years previous, exports had increased 30% over the previous year, and the city's population had risen from nearly 30,000 in 1896 to nearly 40,000 in 1900.

Our block was represented prominently in the *Advertiser's* New Year's edition, with writeups on the Judd Building as one of nine

buildings just completed and the Stangenwald Building as one of five to be built shortly. The block was a typical hodgepodge of the era. A pair of two story business buildings of the 1880's ran along Fort Street; the Spreckels Building with banking as its major concern, and on the Queen Street corner the S. W. Wilder Building of the steamship company. Behind them, on land now occupied by both the Brewer and Star-Bulletin Buildings, were the Wilder sheds, storage areas and lumber yards. A wooden two story building used as the Women's Exchange stood where the *Hawaiian Star* later built. On the future A & B property was a little two story office building and a number of small wooden structures used for such diverse purposes as a blacksmith shop, a shed, offices, and even a dwelling which sat in the middle of Bishop Street. (Bishop Street, and likewise our block as it is currently shaped, did not exist at that time).⁵

The Judd and Stangenwald Buildings were the products of a building spree at the turn of the century which was relatively short, and whose major achievements can be squeezed into a three year period running from 1899 to 1901. Thrum's 1899 *Annual* lists only a handful of new buildings for 1898, but fifteen in various stages in its 1900 *Annual*, and fourteen others in its 1902 edition.⁶ The December, 1900, issue of *Paradise of the Pacific* stated, "architects and contractors are the busiest people in the city this season."⁷ By 1902 the boom was dying, "building projects having suffered from the general trade depression," and only four new buildings are cited in the 1903 *Annual*.⁸

Architecturally, Honolulu was a decade or two into an era which "may be called the Colonial Period since its distinguishing characteristic was an unflinching acceptance of whatever stylistic dictates came from the mainland."⁹ These dictates were numerous, many of them revivals of earlier European styles, and in Honolulu, as elsewhere, the architects borrowed and combined them freely. The 1902 Thrum's *Annual*, referring to the new downtown edifices, talked of "the change from commonplaceness in design, to style and dignity." Cities such as Florence, Venice and Rome were deemed beautiful due to their buildings having "the embellishment of man's art and craft." Honolulu had made a good start, but in order that "'Paradise' will not be a misnomer . . . we must disentangle ourselves wholly from the tentacles of commercialism, for, if we would build enduring works of art, we should not calculate on the so much per square foot basis, for art has never yet been sold by a measure stick."¹⁰ Contrary to those words, the criterion for the critics from the press was usually the bigger and more embellished, the better.

The 1901 Thrum's *Annual* best gives an idea of how the rapid modernization of the city was viewed, and of the most significant buildings it produced.

The improvements in Honolulu in the past year have been so rapid, and of so gigantic and permanent a character that persons who have been away for twelve months, or even six months, are amazed at the advancement to be beheld at every hand. Five years ago there were no four-story buildings in Honolulu. The dream of such was only to be found in the fancy of the poet and the boomer of real estate. But this fancy was not all idle conjecture. Old residents, accustomed to one and two storied business blocks have looked wonderingly up at the masons as they climbed higher and higher into the heavens. First came the Progress and Model blocks, towering far above the business houses, handsome residences and rich lawns of their neighborhood. Then appeared the Judd building, a magnificent four story structure in the business center. The Boston building, just opened, is also four stories high. In course of construction, the Hackfeld building will be one of the finest and costliest business structures in the Pacific. Nearing completion are the Hall building and the Stangenwald building, the latter six stories high. The pride of the town center, however, will be the Young block, work on which has just begun.¹¹

A consensus of the publications of the time would rank the Young Hotel as the number one downtown building, followed in order by the Hackfeld, Stangenwald, Judd, and Boston Buildings.

Looking back a few years, the December, 1906, issue of *Paradise of the Pacific* speaks of the boom as "a blessed one for the community at large for it made a modern city and gave the locality a reputation." It goes on to name twenty-seven buildings specifically and others by type as "benefits of that new model era."¹² The Judd Building was the first of those buildings.

In 1861, Dr. Gerrit P. Judd, having moved from his Finance Minister's post into private practice a few years prior, acquired that 5,049 square foot corner of Fort and Merchant Streets for \$1,400, and used the two story wooden building of 1840 vintage as his drug store and office for a few years before he died. The property passed to his son, Supreme Court Chief Justice Albert F. Judd, who formed the Judd Building Company in 1898 in order to construct the 'Block', as buildings were often called in those days. Judd sold his land for \$48,000 in stock to the Company, whose officers were Judd, President; George R. Carter, Treasurer; and E. A. Jones, Secretary.

Business space was at a premium as evidenced by the fact that six of the nine tenants in the old building were still looking for new quarters at the time of the first announcement of the project, and a

certain Mr. Walton "has become so discouraged in his hunt for new offices that he expresses his intention of doing something desperate."¹³ Originally Judd was going to undertake a two story building alone, but the heavy demand for office space dictated an additional two stories. C. Brewer and Company was early announced as the main tenant to occupy the major part of the ground floor, the lower floors, according to the *Advertiser*, being the most sought after contrary to contemporary mainland preferences. Brewer, however, built its own building elsewhere, only to end up next door eleven years later. Instead the year-old Bank of Hawaii was the Judd Block's main occupant, and when the building opened in March, 1899, the ground floor and all but six (which were taken shortly thereafter) of the thirty offices above were taken with five year leases, a length that would "secure the most desirable set of tenants possible."¹⁴

The Judd Block's attraction to tenants is easily seen. It had a superb central location and, as the *Advertiser* proclaimed, "The top floor commands fine and extensive views, both mauka and makai while the view up Pauoa can hardly be surpassed from any other site."¹⁵ Enticing features included an elevator that was "electric", lighting and ventilation that were "scientific", offices that were of varying sizes and combineable, toilet facilities on each floor that were "sanitary", some thirty-odd telephones throughout, and the first mail chute in the islands. Elevators were new contraptions at the time, and the Judd elevator was touted as speedy and especially safe, having an air cushion at the bottom of the shaft as an extra precaution. (It proved to be less than satisfactory due to low voltage.) The most common adjectives used by the press in describing the building and its various aspects were 'large', 'airy', 'modern', and 'handsome', with favorable comparisons to Eastern buildings often made.

The architect was Oliver G. Traphagen, who had arrived in Honolulu from Duluth, Minnesota, in October, 1897, and within three months had submitted a sketch which was chosen over several others. What the other sketches looked like and why Traphagen's got the nod will probably never be known, but his good reputation on the mainland must have helped in a time when Hawaii was striving to look American.

As he was the major stockholder and the building was to be his memorial, the Chief Justice was the chief client, but possibly not the most active in the project. His profession and advancing age (he died in 1900) may have resulted in many decisions being handled by

his nephew George Carter, who was credited by the *Advertiser* with originating the idea for a building and interesting his uncle in it.¹⁶ An intellectual, politician, and businessman, Carter was then managing the Hawaiian Safe Deposit and Trust Company (later Hawaiian Trust), which handled the financial details of the project and managed the building. At any rate, Traphagen probably had a pretty free hand. His only apparent limitation was the fifty-odd thousand dollars he had to work with, certainly a sum that would permit little extravagance, as did the \$320,000 he was to have available for the Hackfeld Building.

Traphagen, who came to Honolulu for the health of his oldest daughter, was forty-three years old and had left a distinguished practice in Duluth, a city three times the size of Honolulu. Starting as a carpenter he progressed in the 1880's to contractor and architect, and by 1890 was a leading architect of that city, having done more than twenty business blocks and fifty residences. In 1890 he formed a partnership with Francis W. Fitzpatrick, who was on his way to a brilliant career, and for the next six years these men designed some extraordinary buildings of Romanesque style and were called "the leading architects of the Northwest."¹⁷

Arriving at an opportune time, Traphagen's talents were quickly recognized (partly, no doubt, by the illustrations of his Duluth work which hung in his office) and he was the most prolific and highly regarded architect in town. He did a few residences, of which the four story, \$225,000, James B. Castle home at Waikiki Beach was the grandest, but his greatest Waikiki creation was the Moana Hotel. In Duluth he had done no hotels of importance, if any at all, but he certainly adapted to this kind of structure successfully, doing a number of hotels here. He was busiest in business architecture, and the 1902 Hackfeld building was his greatest achievement, culminating the change in his style to classical. In 1907, again for reasons of the health of a child, he moved to San Francisco, where he designed one building and then retired.

The Judd Building was built strong enough to withstand an earthquake; with an iron and steel frame, smooth dressed native blue stone up to the first floor windows and around the Fort Street entrance, and above that the long and narrow yellowish Roman pressed brick, used in notable San Francisco structures such as the Mills Building. Similarly colored terra cotta was used to provide decorative facades, with pillars of polished granite, windows of plate glass, and wood used at a minimum throughout. The contractor was Fred H. Harrison, an established man in the trade since 1880, who

completed the building in a snappy nine months. Traphagen, due probably to his builder background, kept the bill of extras down to a couple of hundred dollars, extremely low for a building whose final cost was \$57,965.57.

The Judd Block was the architect's first major commission in Honolulu and illustrates how "Traphagen was moving away from the Romanesque style of the 1880's and 1890's and towards the classical eclecticism of the turn of the century."¹⁸ The *Advertiser* called it the first example of Italian Renaissance,¹⁹ but there were earlier buildings with some similar Renaissance Revival features, although none as grand. The main entranceway, with its white pillars and crosspiece on which "JUDD BUILDING" was chiseled, was situated on Fort Street, and there were two small doorways on Merchant Street. The central entrance was on the corner, which was an enhancing fifth side to the building, a practice that appeared to be more popular in Honolulu than in big mainland cities.

The cornice extended far out, and below it there was extensive ornamentation around the arches of the fourth floor windows. The other major decorative features were the cornices dividing the first and second and third and fourth floors, the ornaments above the rectangular second and third floor windows, and the raised brick around the corners and on the fourth story. The *Advertiser* summed up the design by stating that it "presents a most dignified appearance, entirely free from any frivolity of ornament which might in any manner mitigate against its true expression as a business building."²⁰

Dr. Hugo Stangenwald arrived in Honolulu in 1853, and became a prominent physician as well as one of the city's pioneer photographers. His home, probably built in the 1860's, is the oldest house of architectural significance still in private domestic use.²¹ He acquired the Merchant Street plot next to Dr. Judd's in 1869 for \$950 and had his office there in partnership with Dr. Judd. In January, 1899, the then retired Dr. Stangenwald entered into an agreement with a hui to lease them his 5,303 square foot parcel of land upon which an office building was to be built. The doctor conceived the building to serve as his monument, for the agreement stated that it was to be at least four stories high, with the construction quality of the Judd Block. The agreement further specified the name of the building, which along with the date was to be cut in stone at the top, \$100 provided by Stangenwald for the lettering and artistic work. The agreement was concluded none too soon, for the doctor lived only till June.

In April the project was publicly announced, with the lessees being

Lorrin A. Thurston, Alfred W. Carter, and Alfred S. Hartwell. They had a thirty year lease for \$1,750 a year with an option to buy in twenty years for \$25,000. The Pacific Building Company was then formed to finance the project, with Hartwell dropping out of the picture when the hui sold the company their interest in the land for \$18,000. The chief financier became the year-old Samuel N. Castle Estate Limited, which by 1901 owned \$50,000 of the \$87,700 stock of the company and held a \$90,000 mortgage. At the outset the President was James B. Castle, with Thurston as Vice President and Carter Secretary.

Stangenwald's property seemed to have a special attraction for lawyers. Besides the doctor's premises, two small law offices were located there in 1899. All the hui members were attorneys, and they took up offices on the upper floors upon completion. The building had all the features of the Judd Block, including an elevator like the ones in San Francisco's towering Call Building. It was to travel at 350 feet per minute, still swift for lowrises today, and faster than its present rate. In addition the Stangenwald offered a vent and pipe shaft for quick repair of any pipe or trap, basement parking for bicycles, and early in the project (January, 1900) the opportunity for tenants to choose the size and shape of their offices. At this time the foundation was just in, occupancy was already 75%, and the plans included two novel and forwardlooking features. One was a third floor law library claimed as "an innovation which few large cities have adopted as yet."²² The other was a Business Men's Club taking up the entire sixth floor with dining facilities at the Waikiki end.

No information concerning the conflicts involved in bringing the project to fruition has been uncovered, but we do know there were some major changes made. Somewhere between January, 1900, and November of the same year, when the final revised plans were drawn, the Business Men's Club was abandoned. The law library was still featured in the September 21 *Advertiser*, but neither the final plans nor the January 1, 1901 *Advertiser* made mention of it. If one followed the press, the height of the building seemed in constant flux. In April of 1899, it was to be a record five stories; by the end of the year it had climbed a story; in September of the following year it was up to seven stories, and in January, 1901, it had finally settled down at six, where it stayed until the building was finally completed in April.

The architect for the Stangenwald Building was Charles W. Dickey, a missionary descendant raised in Oakland, who came to

Hawaii fresh out of MIT where he had received classical European Beaux Arts training in architecture. He arrived in 1895, an opportune time, for it was only in the 1890's that architects in Honolulu could support themselves without doing other work, the typical architect being foremost a builder.²³

Dickey joined C. B. Ripley and among the handful of architects in town this firm became the undisputed leader until Traphagen arrived on the scene. In 1896, for example, the firm designed twenty-four structures costing \$443,600, and they included such diverse buildings as an opera house, a fire station and a stable.²⁴ As Traphagen dominated in hotel work, so Ripley and Dickey specialized in residences, with both doing numerous business and other buildings. As recorded in the January 1, 1900 *Advertiser's* review and preview of the city's building progress, Ripley and Dickey had done 14 of the 36 residences, one school, two commercial buildings, with one more planned. Traphagen had done three of the residences, two hotels, three commercial buildings and had two others planned. Dickey's name by this time was beginning to predominate, and it's obvious he had the greater talent in the firm. The Stangenwald Block was to be his outstanding business building of his early Honolulu days, with the \$72,000 William G. Irwin mansion in Waikiki the masterpiece among his residences.

It is not known how or why Dickey was chosen as the Stangenwald architect. We do know Traphagen had won the Judd Block competition, in which Ripley and Dickey were most surely entered, and that in early 1899 Traphagen submitted a sketch for the Boston Building and was chosen over Ripley and Dickey, who had been doing all the previous work for the owners. One can only speculate as to whether Dickey was picked because of his previous work (including Thurston's home) because Traphagen was too busy (the Boston and Hackfeld Buildings were commissioned about the same time), or because he presented the best sketch. Equally mysterious are the parts that were played in the building's design by Carter, the future czar of Parker Ranch; Thurston, fiery revolutionary leader and enterprising businessman; and Castle, one of Hawaii's most dynamic financiers and big money man in this development.

As for the height, there are no drawings showing five stories, and quite possibly there never were any. The developers possibly switched to the higher level before any architects were in the picture. The seventh story, on the other hand, appears to be a classic confrontation between business economics and architectural aesthetics. As the *Advertiser* put it, "It is possible the promoters will be content with

the six-story proposition. The additional story from an architectural point of view spoils the outlines of the other six."²⁵

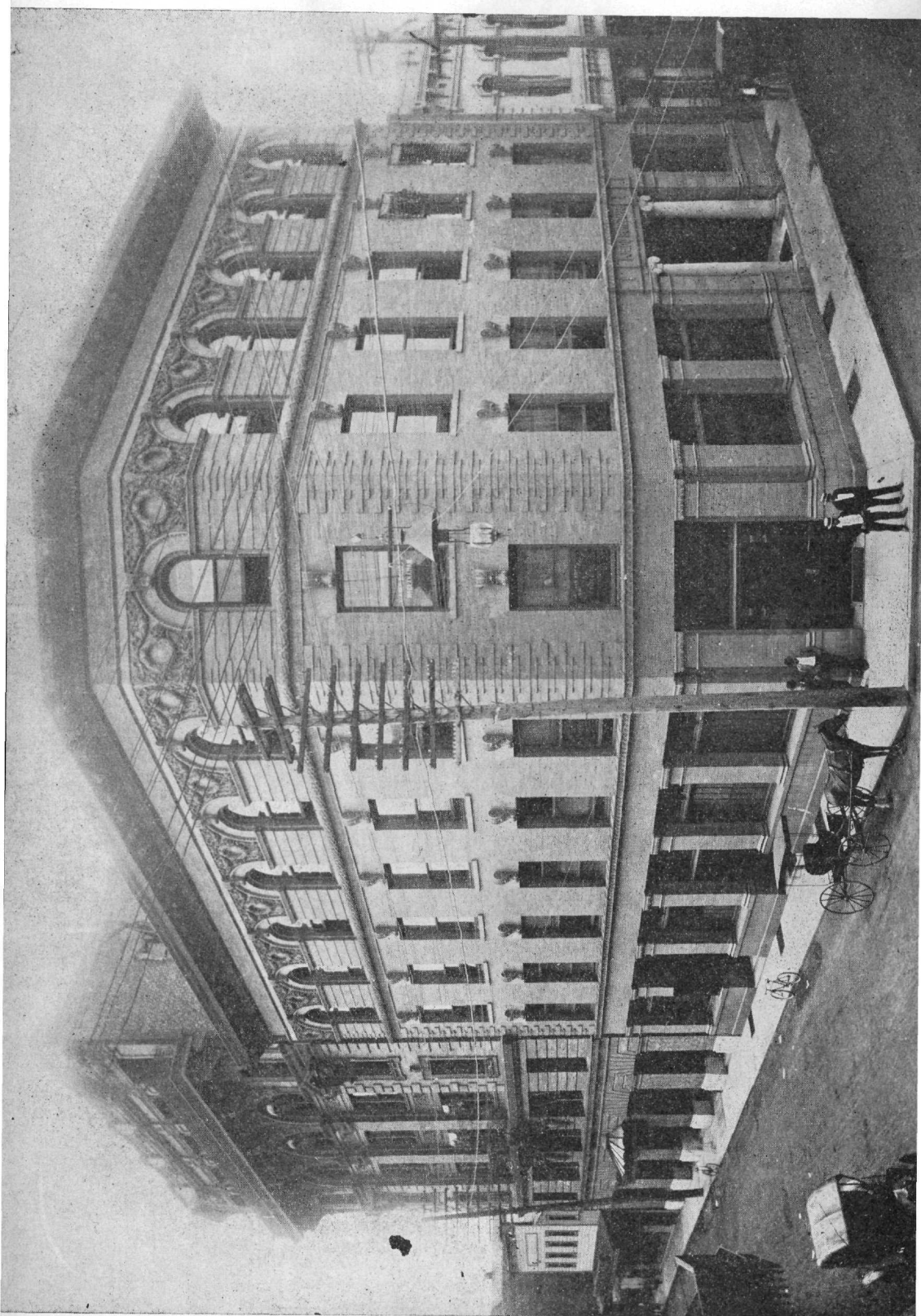
One wonders if this newspaper piece had any influence over the height of the building, especially since Thurston was President and majority stockholder of the paper. The disappearance of the businessmen's club and law library must be attributed to their being victims of either a lack of need for those sorts of conveniences, or an excess of demand for the more lucrative office space.

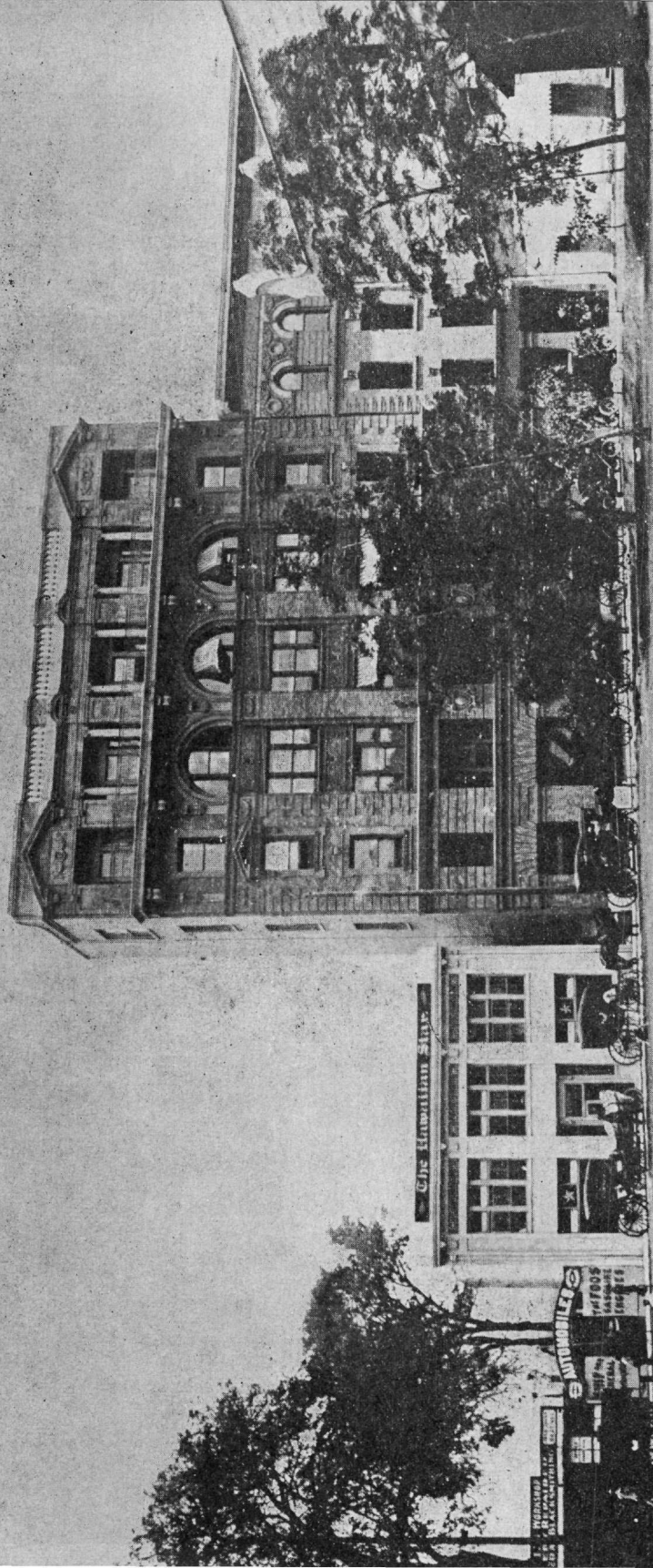
Those offices have been utilized by some of the Islands' more important business concerns. The Henry Waterhouse Trust Company, dealing in stocks and bonds, real estate, insurance and general trust business, initially had the ground floor. Fred T. P. and Henry Waterhouse had successively held Hartwell's interest in the hui before him. B. F. Dillingham Company, which was the only tenant to be listed on the final plans, took about half of the fourth floor, and A & B, who have had the longest continuing residence on the block, was an initial tenant also. Castle & Cooke had their offices there for many years, and even C. Brewer & Company had temporary quarters in the Stangenwald while their building was being built.

The Stangenwald was claimed as the city's "first strictly fireproof building" with "its method of construction being entirely new in Honolulu."²⁶ But nothing was said as to what this new method was, or even the contractor who applied it. Its fireproofness was due to the absence of wood except for the furniture, windows, and oak doors. The structural materials were similar to the Judd Building, with a concrete and stone foundation supporting the steel frame, brick walls, steel and concrete floors, and steel and alpine cement partitions. The building featured fireproof vaults with compartments, and in case a fire did break out every floor had fire hoses.

The Stangenwald was also called an Italian Renaissance building, although like the Judd, many influences were pridefully evident. It was an extremely decorative building, a good deal more so than the Judd, perhaps due to its having less front to worry about and more money to work with. While the Stangenwald had about twice the cubic footage of the Judd Building, it cost nearly three times as much to build. Every floor had a unique exterior, from the French-looking main entrance over which a glass marquise hung, to the

1 The Judd Building, with the Stangenwald Block to the left. Behind the telephone and electrical lines, the Stangenwald Block was the tallest building on the block, a distinction it still enjoys. (Williams Photo, early 1900's, negative at State Archives of Hawaii.)





little wrought-iron third floor balustrade, the arched windows of the fifth floor, and the Greek-like columns and balcony of the sixth. The front of the building was practically covered with terra cotta ornamentation and sheet copper trim. The pre-moulded copper, which was used around the windows, was an imitation of cast iron (although costing more) and had to be mainland mail-ordered. On the inside, the vestibule and hall included mosaic tiled floors and polished marble wainscotting. The stairways were of ornamental iron, with slate and marble steps.

The building boom at the turn of the century produced the first vertical change in the appearance of downtown Honolulu in fifty years, and the last for another half century. It was in the early 1850's that the first major business building activity took place. The sketches of Swiss artist Paul Emmert in 1854 show a number of new business structures, a few of which were three stories, a new height for the port. The first three-story building was the 1848 Custom House, a simple barnlike structure used for various purposes. The most impressive of those original highrises, although a midget compared to Philadelphia's ten-story Jayne Building of 1852, was the Makee & Anthon Building of 1854. Designed and sent out from Boston, it was Honolulu's first fireproof, pressed-brick structure, its first office building, and the only one with a modern look for its time.

The Judd Block was a new height, made practicable by the technology of the elevator and possible by the economics of prosperity, and a standard which other buildings of the period strove to emulate. But on a national scale, Honolulu's buildings were puny. Claus Spreckels, long one of Hawaii's most powerful businessmen and large owner on the block, had his twenty-story San Francisco building up by 1897. The real action was back East, where New York's Park Row Building, pushing thirty stories, became the tallest building in the world after it was completed in the same year as the Judd Building.

Architecturally, the Judd Block became a short example of what has been called the second phase of American highrise development²⁷ when it brought together for the first time in Hawaii an elevator, iron framing and the heretofore missing element—height. And, by the grouping of its stories, the building demonstrated the principal

²⁷ This photograph is easy to date, for the Hawaiian Star Building was only finished a few months before the Star Bulletin took it over in 1912. Horses and carriages appear to outnumber the horseless carriages, and open space is still available to enhance the view of these buildings. Stangenwald Block in the center, Judd Building on the right. (Ray Jerome Baker Collection, Bishop Museum)

characteristic of the third phase, which had started two decades earlier in the states. Although four stories did not require it, Traphagen followed the tripartite system of composition likened to the classic base, shaft and capital of a column. While Traphagen used an ordered and easily recognized 1-2-1 mathematical progression, the Stangenwald Building's two additional stories allowed Dickey to engage in the more typical and individualistic "wild work" style of the 80's, producing a 2-3-1 progression.

The Stangenwald Block's six stories set a limit which for five decades builders adhered to. The city expanded horizontally, and while there were a few vertical exceptions, these were not indicative of a new growth in Honolulu's skyline. The 1920's produced such uniquely storied buildings as Honolulu Hale and the Aloha Tower, whose slender seven and ten towers were, like church steeples, for esthetic purposes. For opposite reasons Theo H. Davies Company crammed eight stories into the small inner court of their monolith, which had a four-story exterior. The new Tripler Hospital of 1945 reached 14 stories, but its builder, use and location designate it as out of the construction mainstream.

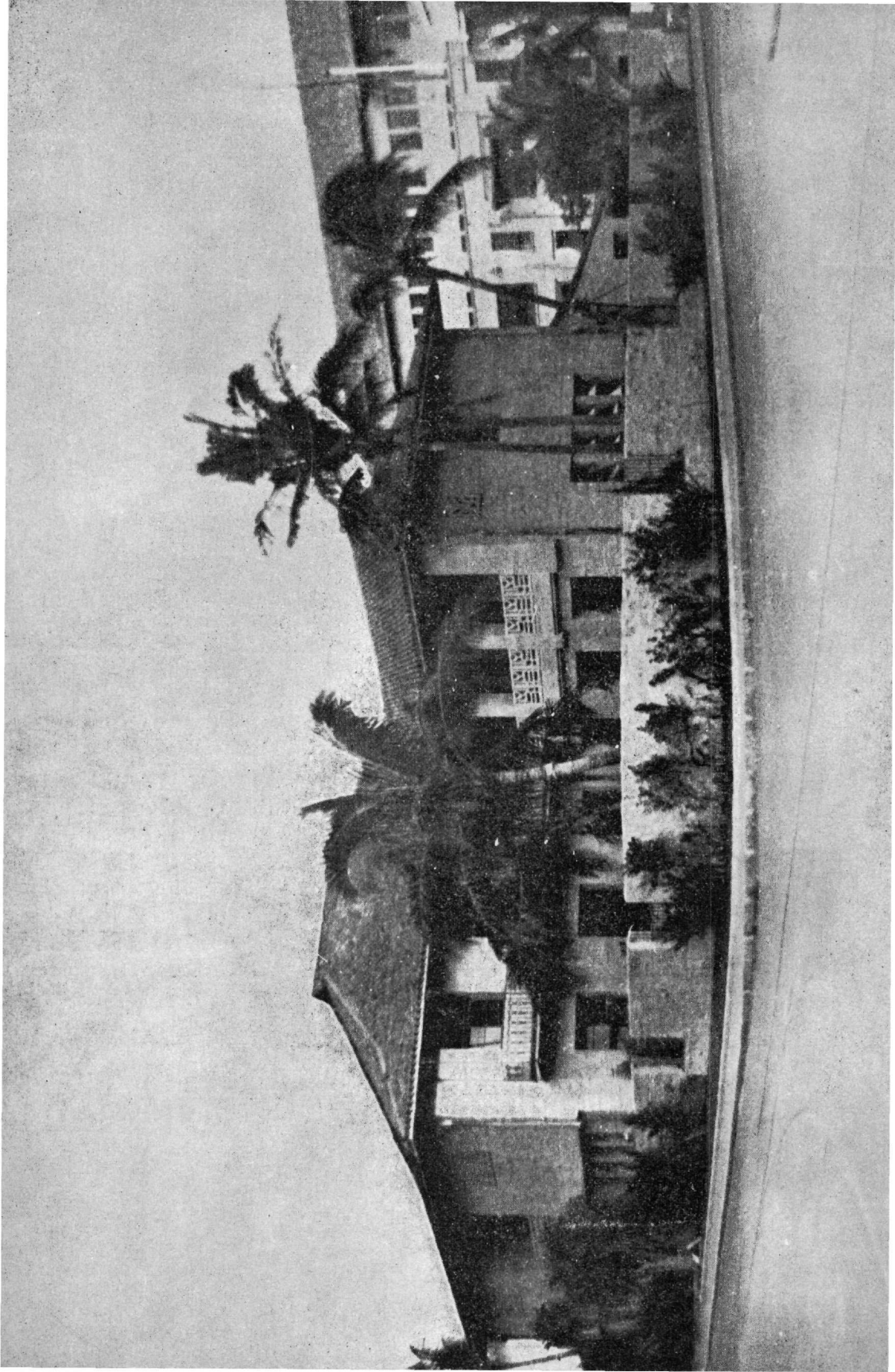
Foreshadowing the tourist boom, Waikiki first started to edge up from six stories with the comparatively inconspicuous seven-story Edgewater Hotel in 1950. In 1955 the twelve-story (Traphagen had gone as high in Duluth) Princess Kaiulani Hotel was the first significant jump. In the then lagging business district, Honolulu Gas Company started things climbing by inching up to seven stories in 1954. Others followed, with the 19-story First Hawaiian Bank Building in 1962 being the start of downtown's latest skyscraper period.

THE PRESS AND THE PLANT—THE NEWSPAPER BUILDINGS

The second decade of the 20th century was for Honolulu a barren architectural period in general and for business edifices in particular. Nothing of much importance was built between the 1909 Yokohama Specie Bank and the 1920 Theo H. Davies Building. It was during this period that the two newspaper buildings were erected. Both showed elements of the commercial style which began around 1890. Flat roofs, straight fronts, little ornament, regular patterns, rectangular windows, and large glass areas were characteristic of this style.

3 *The Alexander and Baldwin Building soon after its completion in 1929. (Ray Jerome Baker Collection, Bishop Museum)*





These buildings were not architectural memorials that had to attract tenants like the Judd and Stangenwald Blocks; rather their purpose was to provide quarters for the company alone, their use a mixture of office and light industrial, and their design straightforward and pragmatic.

On April 10, 1912 the *Hawaiian Star*, a popular Honolulu daily owned by Charles H. Atherton, moved from its McCandless Building offices to its brand new building at 126 Merchant Street. No fanfare accompanied the move; the paper made no mention of it except that the new address appeared that day on its editorial page. The *Star* had obtained a lease for \$250 a month from sons of Claus Spreckels in December, 1911, demolished the old wooden structure there last known to be used as the City Auction Rooms, and had their concrete building up in four months. It was reported in *Thrum's Annual* as one of ten new downtown buildings in 1912, the most impressive being a four-story apartment building costing \$90,000.

The *Star* displayed a suspiciously blasé attitude when they made no mention of the new premises, but perhaps they were waiting for the merger with the *Evening Bulletin* to announce it. The first issue of the new *Star-Bulletin* on July 1 showed a picture of the building and said it would house the paper's business office, job printing department and binding department.

It is not known who did the architectural work but the building was in many ways a modern one for Honolulu. Its Merchant Street facade used rectangular shapes, with maximum window space in its three large bays, the middle one on the street level being a slightly recessed entranceway. Short for two stories, nevertheless its pronounced lines, well-defined by the contrast of the light concrete with the dark glass areas and horizontal strips near the top, gave the building a simple attractiveness.

After a couple of years the *Star-Bulletin*, whose operations were split between the Merchant Street building and the old *Evening Bulletin's* building on Alakea Street, decided to consolidate the locations. In April, 1915, the J. B. Atherton Estate bought from the Spreckels' heirs the parcel where the newspaper's building stood and the strip behind running to Queen Street totalling 11,080 square feet for \$55,668. The Estate, majority owner in the paper, had a three-story building erected and leased it all to the *Star-Bulletin*.

At that time about two million dollars a year was being spent for

⁴ C. Brewer Building in the 1930's. Alexander and Baldwin Building shows to the right. (State Archives of Hawaii)

building in Honolulu. The biggest project was the new Oahu Prison and one of the costlier structures going up was the Schuman Carriage Company's \$75,000 office and garage on our block at the corner of Merchant and Bishop Streets. The *Star-Bulletin's* building cost a modest \$46,348 and was built by the Spalding Construction Company, which had offices in San Francisco and Honolulu.

The architects for the building were Ripley and Davis. Clinton B. Ripley's career as a Hawaiian architect spanned three decades. A Maine native, coming by way of California, the 42 year old Ripley started his practice in 1891, and also served as Commissioner of Patents for a few years beginning in 1894. His association with Dickey was the city's first modern partnership and lasted until the height of the building activity in 1900, at which time he became president of the Concrete Construction Company. That venture folded in a couple of years as the boom ended and for the next decade Ripley was in and out of the Territory. In 1910 Ripley formed a partnership with Arthur L. Reynolds, and by 1913 newcomer Louis E. Davis had joined the firm and Reynolds departed. This partnership carried on for a decade, and after Ripley died, Davis practiced for another fifteen years. The firm did a variety of work competently, producing little of architectural genius. Ripley, probably most notable as one of Hawaii's first independent architects who wasn't a contractor at the same time, enjoyed his greatest popularity in the 1890's, particularly with his residences. His most notable works were the H. P. Baldwin Home with Dickey in 1899, the Princess Theater in 1921, and Hawaii Hall at the University in 1911 with Reynolds, who later did the Aloha Tower.

The *Star-Bulletin's* new building was actually an overwhelming addition to the original Star Building, as the two of them were connected by hallways and thus all operations were housed under one roof. The inside was the important thing in the new building. The *Star-Bulletin's* anniversary issue of July 1, 1916, showed dozens of interior photos of the premises and two of the exterior. The opening held that same day gave the public an opportunity to tour the new quarters, and "the commodious and orderly arrangement of the building and the views of newspaper making at full blast all received much comment."²⁸ Any comment on the exterior was not recorded.

The building gave the *Star-Bulletin* the most modern newspaper plant in the state, allowed them ample room (the Merchant Street second floor was rented), and served them well from one world war to the next. The Merchant Street wing took care of the business affairs and the reporters and presses occupied the three stories in

the Queen Street wing. Atop the new building was a roof garden upon which the gala opening ceremonies were held, and where the employees could have lunch.

The Queen Street face was functionally the back of the building, but since it was on a major street, it was not ignored like most backs were in those days and treated architecturally as a front. The sides looked like any typical warehouse-industrial building with the plain walls broken up by projected sash windows and a fire escape. The front was much more impressive, with the projected sash windows producing a very modern solid glass effect. More conventional were the columns, showing a toned-down classical influence, and above the plain cornice a few large and small decorative gables which blended well with the elevator shaft.

HOMAGE AND THE HOME—THE COMPANY BUILDINGS

Honolulu went through a period of considerable material growth in the 1920's. By the end of the decade the automobile had completely replaced the horse, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel had become Waikiki's grandest, and a number of new government and commercial buildings had greatly changed the downtown area. Not until the 60's was there a decade that produced so many important downtown buildings, from the Davies Building, first and largest, to the C. Brewer Building, last and smallest.

The Colonial Period in Hawaii's architectural history was being replaced by the Provincial Period during this time. In the large buildings clients were asking for architecture that was uniquely Hawaiian, and architects were searching for it and responding with a variety of forms and styles combined so as to be peculiar to Hawaii. Nationally, Spanish or Mediterranean Revival was a style in vogue, which in Hawaii was often used in conjunction with oriental, particularly Chinese, influences to produce some distinctive and fine Hawaiian buildings.

Alexander and Baldwin Limited, last of the big five to come into existence, was also last to have its own building. The firm opened a branch office in Honolulu in the late 1890's, was in the Judd Building by the time of incorporation in 1900, and moved to the Stangenwald Building when it opened. Early in 1924 the decision was made to build. Within a month the company had bought the Merchant and Bishop corner from Bishop Bank for \$140,000, and two years later increased their lot to 18,000 square feet by purchasing

the Queen Street corner from Interisland Steam Navigation Company for \$125,000. The property was being used for auto shelters at the time.

The Alexander and Baldwin Building was uniquely a family product. It was expressly planned as a memorial to the founders, Henry P. Baldwin and Samuel T. Alexander. The latter's son, A & B President Wallace M. Alexander, only survivor of the original partnership, first suggested the new building in a director's meeting. Alexander along with other family members such as Harry A. Baldwin took an active interest in the building, and his first cousin Will Dickey was chosen to be the architect.

As the Stangenwald Block was the best business building of Dickey's early Hawaiian work, so was the A & B Building of his later period. These two buildings illustrate the change from copying national trends to striving for a regional style. Between his two periods Dickey spent twenty years in Oakland, leaving Hawaii in 1905 due to the dwindling opportunities the islands were presenting. He continued to do occasional building in Hawaii, making him Hawaii's first commuter architect.

After his return in 1924, Dickey quickly became noted for his residences which were Hawaiian in flavor, due chiefly to his roof. The "Dickey" or "Hawaiian" roof, as it has been called, if not originated was certainly popularized by the architect. Characterized by its high peak, low eaves, wide spread and double pitch, the roof was his trademark and was used in his nonresidential work also, the Halekalani Hotel being perhaps the best example. Dickey died in 1942, leaving dozens of buildings that show why he has always been a leading Hawaiian architect.

The other architect involved in the A & B Building was Hart Wood, a junior partner with Dickey at the time. Born in Philadelphia, Wood came to Hawaii in 1919 after 16 years of practice in San Francisco and remained until his death in 1957. He split with Dickey before the completion of the A & B Building, and usually worked alone. Wood was an artistic, sometimes temperamental architect, and one of those responsible for introducing oriental influences to Hawaiian architecture. Two of his most famous works are churches with almost identical interiors; the 1923 Christian Science Church in the Arts and Craft style and the First Chinese Christian Church of 1929 which blends Christian and Chinese elements. Wood was a master of ornamentation, and often combined this skill with simple structural designs to give distinctiveness to his buildings. He did some beautiful residences and well designed

buildings for the Board of Water Supply. While using a wide variety of architectural styles in his buildings, Wood was able to give them a Hawaiian identity; the best example of how various and diverse forms and influences could be combined with the result a beautiful and uniquely Hawaiian building being the A & B Building.

While Dickey oversaw the project, handled client relations, took trips to the mainland to secure materials and made the final decisions, Wood was responsible for the design details of the building. There were some problems in arriving at the final exterior design, particularly with the entranceway, and about half a dozen schemes were considered before the present one was chosen. Originally the building was to be three stories, but a fourth was added to allow more rental space, or perhaps it was to add stature to the monument so that it could be pointed out from arriving ships as Wallace Alexander, who made the voyage from his Oakland home twice a year, wanted.

The Board of Directors approved the preliminary sketches in November, 1926. In these drawings, the entrance was topped with a widespreading marquis, the windows appeared to span both the first and second floors, and the name of the firm was spelled out in large letters across the front. At this time the building was expected to cost \$800,000 and be finished by late 1928. The plans showed a concern for the building's surroundings that was novel to the block and in slight evidence throughout downtown when it was decided "a ten foot permanent setback would be placed on all four sides of the lot so as to insure air, light and planting."²⁹

Although the client was pleased with the sketch, the architects had second thoughts on it, and after a few more schemes, the final design evolved in the summer of 1927. The main change was in the entrance-way, which lost its marquis, grew wider and taller, adding square ionic columns, and was definitely an impressive improvement. Other changes included dividing the windows, giving the roof a wider overhang, making the size and placement of the name less conspicuous and modifying some of the top story. The final revised plans, comprising 44 architectural drawings and 32 structural, plumbing, electrical and mechanical drawings, were ready on May 1, 1928.

In order to save time and lower costs on such a huge project, the company followed Dickey's suggestion to give out many contracts, from the waterproofing of the basement to the tiling of the roof. The contracts were coordinated by Charles R. Hemenway, a vice president and manager of the project, and Dickey. Ralph E. Woolley

was given the main building contract, but there were at least a dozen others, including materials supplied from Europe and three groups of craftsmen brought from the mainland to work on certain decorative features. There were the usual problems, such as the travertine delayed from Italy and the wrong roof tile sent from the mainland that had to be returned.

There were also some unusual structural problems and features in the building. After the Yokohama Species Bank, it was reputed to be the only other building of 100% concrete and steel. The basement, used for parking, storage and utility space, was a problem for the foundation contractor Russel R. Ames. Constructed without piles and lying below water level, the basement required continuous pumping and large concrete pourings of up to 1,000 yards before it was finally made watertight. The salt water was put to good use in the toilet system, and later in the 50's to help run the air conditioning. Manager and vice president John Waterhouse, who was the chief decision maker within A & B, opposed air conditioning as unnecessary in the island climate. With good forethought, there were ducts and an air washer-blower system installed providing some fresh air and facilitating the future conversion to air conditioning.

This decision not to go all the way with a "cooling plant" is the only evident economic measure in the building. The firm spared no expense to insure the building's highest quality in every respect. When it was pointed out to the Directors that money could be saved by having a flat roof, the idea was rejected after Dickey, who seemed to have had a free reign, said it would ruin the appearance. Alexander is also reported to have favored the "Hawaiian" roof. One story recounts how Waterhouse was pleased when he first saw the Trustees Room on the fourth floor, but upon learning that the beautiful marble stage was made of a new synthetic material, he ordered it ripped out and replaced with the real thing. Unlike the earlier edifices on the block, A & B's was not built to produce revenues and was therefore a truer memorial, a fact reflected on the balance sheet by writing off half the cost (\$1,241,947) immediately.

The A & B Building had all the luxuries to be found in a business structure. The elevators for the tenants at the Merchant Street entrance were unusually large, safe and decorative. There was walnut and, in the Directors' Room, koa furniture, with the traditional company chair design remaining unchanged. Most of the decorative work was concentrated in the huge Bishop Street entranceway. Inside, the ceiling reached thirty-five feet, with the second floor

mezzanine overlooking the big main room. Two art tile panels, 10 by 33 feet, graced the upper mauka and makai sides. The artist for one panel was Californian Jessie Stanton, who after an extended stay in the islands, gave to Hawaii a product good enough to be called "the finest piece of art work in the Pacific."³⁰

The building was put in a tropical setting by landscape architect Richard C. Tongg. In practice for less than a year, Tongg had recently returned from California where he had studied four years, including some time under the Royal Hawaiian's landscaper Ralph Stevens. Cyperus grass was put in around the building and when full grown coconut trees were transplanted, it was such a novelty they were called "the palms that 'grew' overnight."³¹ An innovation that has not been so successfully imitated was the green sidewalk, the purpose of which was to absorb the glare, make it cooler and blend with the landscaping.

Although primarily to honor the founders and house the company headquarters, half the building was given over to tenants. Before the main building contract had been let the fourth floor was taken by the HSPA and the law firm of Smith, Warren, Stanley & Vitousek. Even earlier, two years prior to completion and before excavation had started, Standard Oil took a portion of the third floor, where it remains today. Although the building was typically and perhaps necessarily inflexible, it was not that much of a handicap to A & B, which had ample space to expand. Of the numerous grand business and government buildings of the 20's, many are gone, some continue as the main quarters although overflowing into other buildings, but only the A & B Building can accomodate its owner and still have room left over for tenants.

On September 30, 1929, three and a half years after the project began, the A & B Building had its grand opening. It was a major event in Honolulu, and among the many who came to admire and congratulate were former Governor Farrington, Governor Judd, Judge Frear and Walter Dillingham. It was front page material for both dailies, which had covered the building's progress through the years with dozens of articles. In an editorial that day, the *Star Bulletin* called the building "the architectural expression of a triumph of human courage, ingenuity, energy and faith over the obstacles, seen and unseen, which beset the pioneer of industrial Hawaii."³²

It was also the triumph of a mixture of architectural influences and innovations combined successfully into an Hawaiian building. Known primarily for its Chinese features, the building included elements and ornamentation found in Mediterranean, Moorish,

Renaissance Italian, Buddhist, Tibetan, Japanese, and Hawaiian architecture. It was constantly stressed that the building would be "in keeping" with the other Bishop Street business homes. In one sense it was, being an expensive, monumental building of the same general height. But it also reflected the change from colonial to provincial architecture along the street as well as for the architect. In the mid 20's Dickey had done the neighboring Castle and Cooke Building, which had traditional classical motifs. The Bishop Street buildings of the late 20's (Bank of Hawaii, A & B, and Dillingham) broke away from the classical and were very Mediterranean, but the Alexander and Baldwin Building, with its strong oriental influences, was the most eclectic and the most ambitious in its attempt at being uniquely Hawaiian.

C. Brewer and Company, the oldest firm still active in the islands, occupied five buildings on three sites before it built its present headquarters. The company established a pattern of occupying an existing premise, later building new facilities, and then moving on. The first building in 1826 was an adobe shack, replaced six years later with a two-story stone building. This Fort Street site, where the Boston Building sits now, was abandoned in 1859 for the waterfront where the old coral Market Building was home for forty years before it was replaced with another two-story stone building by Dickey. In 1910, Brewer took over William G. Irwin and Company, moving to the latter's roomier headquarters in the Spreckels Building on Fort Street. By 1921 a new building was being thought of, and a corner parcel at King and Richards was bought as its future site, but it was decided in 1928 to sell this site, as it was too far from the center of business activity. An offer from B. F. Dillingham and Company to exchange it for the Makai-Waikiki side of Bishop and Queen streets was turned down. Since it already owned its premises, having paid the Spreckels Estate \$85,000 for 14,192 square feet in 1910, Brewer, in June 1928, decided to buy the adjacent 11,392 square feet along Queen Street for \$75,000 from the J. B. Atherton Estate, and was ready to build its new home.

Within the company Richard A. Cooke, moved from Manager and Vice President to President in January, 1930, was the chief man in the project, while his future successor and brother-in-law Phillip E. Spalding also had a hand in it. Cooke was probably responsible for the choice of Hardie Phillips of the New York firm of Mayer, Murray and Phillips as the chief architect. Phillips was no stranger to the islands, having been a favorite in the past of the ubiquitous Cooke family. Besides a few Cooke homes, he worked with the

renowned pioneer of the Spanish style Bertram Goodhue on the Academy of Arts Building, completing it in 1927 after Goodhue had died, and in the same year he finished the heralded Bank of Hawaii Building, both Cooke enterprises. The firm sent out Harry S. Bent to be their supervising architect. Bent stayed on to become a well known decorative, residential architect, doing such homes as the Harold Castle residence in Maunawili and an enlargement of the C. M. Cooke residence, now the Makiki Branch of the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

The most unique aspect of the Brewer Building was its size. While typically the new quarters that Hawaii's major companies built in the 20's were four story monoliths that had plenty of extra room for tenants, the Brewer Building was a petite two stories, resembling a small mansion rather than a business edifice, and was meant solely for the company, as its buildings traditionally were. The *Star-Bulletin* said it was "designed and constructed as a 'home' rather than merely a business establishment."³³ While there's no concrete evidence of a specific desire to emulate a residence, as in the other Cooke-Phillips buildings, there appears to be a definite attempt to domesticate, which is most successful in the Brewer Building due to its landscaping, modest size and pure Spanish style of architecture.

Besides tradition, aesthetics and whatever other factors may have influenced the building's size, the financial factor undoubtedly played its part. In November, 1928, Bent gave the Board of Directors a liberal estimate of \$380,000 for the construction. When bids were called for in September, 1929, Bent passed over the two lowest bidders, because of qualifications, reservations, and subcontractors, to recommend the firm of Walker and Olund, whose bid of \$319,258 was accepted. Razing started in the same month the crash did, and the company must have been thankful the building would cost only one half the just-started Dillingham complex and one quarter the just-completed A & B Building.

The building, a combination of reinforced concrete and cut island blue stone, was finished in a year and the opening was held on November 5, 1930. Befitting the building, the opening was not as grand as some, nevertheless it featured Hawaiian music and drew hundreds of people, plant and flower gifts, and praise. The Brewer Building may have been the most pure Mediterranean Revival structure of those that were built in Honolulu. The tile roof, rough textured stucco finish, irregular shape, and surrounding balconies, garden, and wall made it very hacienda-like and distinctively unique for a business building. Thrum's *Annual* reservedly referred to it as

“a departure from the ordinary.”³⁴

The decorative work was modest, symbolic and Hawaiian. The green wrought iron railings and grill work represented sugar cane and the modernistic light fixtures were sugar cubes. Ohia wood handsomely adorned the Directors' Room and the public lobby had a teakwood ceiling. The company's employees enjoyed many of the usual conveniences such as a refrigerator and kitchen, but there were no drinking fountains. Instead, from the taps throughout the building ice water was available, a luxury suitable to Hawaii's climate and adding to the building's eccentric character.

One of the outstanding features of the Brewer Building was its greenery. The Company had the biggest lot on the block (9,000 square feet larger than the A & B Building and 6,000 square feet larger than the other four combined) and could afford a building, a driveway running around it with a garage for a dozen cars, and “a tropical native Hawaiian garden in the heart of Honolulu.”³⁵ With its garden, Brewer surpassed A & B as the leader in exquisite business landscaping. Forty-eight varieties of trees, shrubs and vines, including the night blooming cereus introduced by Charles Brewer, were planted under the direction of landscape architects Catherine Jones Richards and Robert Oliver Thompson. The seven foot lava wall which ran around three sides of the property made it a private garden.

The Brewer Building was designed with specific functions in mind. The final plans designated all the rooms for the executives and departments on the first floor, with rooms on the much smaller second floor described as being for general offices. There wasn't much reason to worry about expansion at that time as employment had remained stable for decades. The building could afford to be inflexible. It was as difficult to add any meaningful space and still keep its original design as it was to change the thick rock walls of the interior. Even the Directors' table had 12 sides to it. But times changed, Brewer's employees grew, and by 1947 there was a plan for a major enlargement which was never realized. It was said at the opening that the Brewer Building would stand with the pyramids, and perhaps it will, for by the mid 60's when the company finally outgrew it and the land department was squeezed out, the building had already survived several abortive plans for adding to or rebuilding.

It's possible the building could originally have been quite different looking. Old Brewer employees have said that the walls and building were going to be left as natural stone, but once completed

stucco was added. Considering the final plans of March, 1929, which were approved six months later by Spalding, indicated a stucco brush coat to go on the exterior, and that the style and color was typical of Phillips' work, it appears the building was finished as planned. Nevertheless, it could be there was a decision by Brewer officials not to follow Phillips' plan and that that decision was reversed after actually viewing the results.

THE AGING PROCESS

Although each of these buildings has its own unique qualities, there are at least two ways in which they are similar today. First, in a city whose construction rate in the 1960's was high on a national scale, they have rapidly aged in comparison accordingly, and even the newest is for Honolulu an old building, and the oldest near ancient. Their second common feature is that they have all undergone change in some form—from modifications that were expressly planned so as not to disturb the dignity and intent of a building's architecture, to alterations that blatantly ignored these ideas.

In this respect it is the one-owner buildings on the block (A & B and C. Brewer) that have fared the best. Where there have been subsequent owners, they have tended to know or care less about the original architecture of their rental units than did the companies who lived in their "homes." C. Brewer added a second floor room which blended well with the rest of the building, while A & B's greatest external addition was a matched mini-gable in the rear roof to facilitate air-conditioning. Internally the changes were major, with A & B putting in a second floor and Brewer making modifications that also lessened its lobby spaciousness. But interior modernization is a necessity for practically all buildings except museums, and it is the change and nonchange in the exterior which is of primary interest here.

Probably the most changed exterior is that of the Judd Building. The Bank of Hawaii started in 1910, when they bought the building, moved the pillars for the main entrance, closed the corner entrance, and did away with the name "Judd Building." (Very few names survive a change in ownership). Before they resold it in 1927 to move into their celebrated new building, they left their old one with an extra story. This not uncommon practice of stacking a new floor onto an existing building, which is said to be peculiar to Honolulu, may have even originated with the Judd Building. The fifth floor

had no resemblance whatsoever to the other four as has been true of all such additions. Finally with yet another owner, the corner door has been re-opened, the pillars covered over, and the entire ground floor modernized with blue tile to give it a bathroom look.

The Stangenwald Building has undergone relatively minor modifications; the brick sides have been plastered over, the entrance canopy taken down and recently the sixth floor balcony removed as a safety measure. The Hawaiian Star Building has changed little except for a different color scheme thanks to some innocuous paint and tile. The face of the Star-Bulletin Building was altered drastically when it was recently modernized for office use by doing away with the gables and putting in new windows in less space. Notwithstanding these alterations, the block today is a living museum, exhibiting buildings that are typical, unique, historical and beautiful.

NOTES

- ¹ Robert C. Schmitt, *Demographic Statistics of Hawaii: 1778-1965* (Honolulu, 1968), pp. 115, 127.
- ² F, Jan. 1900, p. 5.
- ³ PP, Jan. 1900, inside cover.
- ⁴ HAA, 1900, p. 160.
- ⁵ *Fire Insurance Map of Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands* (San Francisco, 1899).
- ⁶ HAA, 1899, p. 154; HAA, 1900, pp. 160-161; HAA, 1902, pp. 161-162.
- ⁷ PP, Dec. 1900, p. 12.
- ⁸ HAA, 1903, p. 153.
- ⁹ J. M. Neil, *Paradise Improved* (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), p. 20.
- ¹⁰ HAA, 1902, p. 147.
- ¹¹ HAA, 1901, p. 161.
- ¹² PP, Dec. 1906, p. 36.
- ¹³ PCA, Jan. 20, 1898, p. 2.
- ¹⁴ PCA, March 16, 1899, p. 5.
- ¹⁵ PCA, Jan. 1, 1900, p. 7.
- ¹⁶ *op. cit.*
- ¹⁷ *Duluth Daily Tribune*, Aug. 4, 1891.
- ¹⁸ James Scott, "Traphagen and Fitzpatrick: Representative Architects of Duluth" (unpublished ms., copy in AH).
- ¹⁹ PCA, July 16, 1898, p. 1.
- ²⁰ *op. cit.*

- ²¹ Historic Buildings Task Force, *Old Honolulu, a Guide to Oahu's Historic Buildings* (Honolulu, 1969), No. 66.
- ²² PCA, Sept. 21, 1900, p. 6.
- ²³ Charles E. Peterson, "Pioneer Architects and Builders of Honolulu," HHS *Annual Report*, 1963, pp. 22-23.
- ²⁴ PCA, Jan. 1, 1897, p. 1.
- ²⁵ PCA, Sept. 21, 1900, p. 6.
- ²⁶ PCA, Jan. 1, 1901, p. 26.
- ²⁷ Winston Weisman, "A New View of Skyscraper History," in *The Rise of an American Architecture* (New York, 1970), p. 129.
- ²⁸ HSB, July 1, 1916, p. 1.
- ²⁹ HA, Oct. 31, 1926, p. 13A.
- ³⁰ HA, April 21, 1928, p. 10.
- ³¹ HSB, Aug. 27, 1929, p. 3.
- ³² HSB, Sept. 30, 1929, p. 6.
- ³³ *op. cit.*
- ³⁴ HAA, 1930, p. 119.
- ³⁵ HSB, Nov. 6, 1930, p. 18.